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W. C. Larnigan

Christmas 1900

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# BALLADS OF BLUE WATER AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JAMES JEFFREY ROCHE



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## DEDICATION

TO MY CANOE, "WANDA"

*Of distant deeds sing I who ne'er  
Did anything, went anywhere ;*

*Of storm and battle on the blue —  
Whose total fleet is one canoe.*

*I might, had Fortune so inclined,  
Have fought, and left my shield behind !*

*Let him who takes his armor off  
Boast if he will ; and should he scoff*

*At us who never put it on,  
Still may we praise the heroes gone,*

*And rest content that we have known  
Some joys that go with peace alone.*

*The bark that carried Cæsar's fate  
Bore never such a precious freight*

*As thou didst bear, one day, when She  
Sang, not of war, for thee and me.*





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## BALLADS OF BLUE WATER AND OTHER POEMS

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### THE FIGHT OF THE "ARMSTRONG" PRIVATEER

TELL the story to your sons  
Of the gallant days of yore,  
When the brig of seven guns  
Fought the fleet of seven score,  
From the set of sun till morn, through the long  
September night —  
Ninety men against two thousand, and the ninety  
won the fight  
In the harbor of Fayal the Azore.

Three lofty British ships came a-sailing to Fayal :  
One was a line-of-battle ship, and two were frigates  
tall ;  
Nelson's valiant men of war, brave as Britons ever  
are,  
Manned the guns they served so well at Aboukir  
and Trafalgar.

2 THE FIGHT OF THE "ARMSTRONG"

Lord Dundonald and his fleet at Jamaica far  
away

Waited eager for their coming, fretted sore at their  
delay.

There was loot for British valor on the Mississippi  
coast

In the beauty and the booty that the Creole cities  
boast ;

There were rebel knaves to swing, there were pris-  
oners to bring

Home in fetters to old England for the glory of the  
King !

At the setting of the sun and the ebbing of the  
tide

Came the great ships one by one, with their portals  
opened wide,

And their cannon frowning down on the castle and  
the town

And the privateer that lay close inside ;

Came the eighteen gun *Carnation*, and the *Rota*,  
forty-four,

And the triple-decked *Plantagenet* an admiral's  
pennon bore ;

And the privateer grew smaller as their topmasts  
towered taller,

And she bent her springs and anchored by the  
castle on the shore.

Spake the noble Portuguese to the stranger :

“ Have no fear ;

They are neutral waters these, and your ship is  
sacred here

As if fifty stout armadas stood to shelter you from  
harm,

For the honor of the Briton will defend you from  
his arm.”

But the privateersman said, “ Well we know the  
Englishmen,

And their faith is written red in the Dartmoor  
slaughter pen.

Come what fortune God may send, we will fight  
them to the end,

And the mercy of the sharks may spare us then.”

“ Seize the pirate where she lies ! ” cried the Eng-  
lish admiral :

“ If the Portuguese protect her, all the worse for  
Portugal ! ”

And four launches at his bidding leaped impa-  
tient for the fray,

Speeding shoreward where the Armstrong, grim  
and dark and ready, lay.

Twice she hailed and gave them warning ; but the  
feeble menace scorning,

On they came in splendid silence, till a cable’s  
length away —

4     *THE FIGHT OF THE "ARMSTRONG"*

Then the Yankee pivot spoke ; Pico's thousand  
    echoes woke ;

And four baffled, beaten launches drifted helpless  
    on the bay.

Then the wrath of Lloyd arose till the lion roared  
    again,

And he called out all his launches and he called  
    five hundred men ;

And he gave the word " No quarter ! " and he sent  
    them forth to smite.

Heaven help the foe before him when the Briton  
    comes in might !

Heaven helped the little Armstrong in her hour of  
    bitter need ;

God Almighty nerved the heart and guided well  
    the arm of Reid.

Launches to port and starboard, launches forward  
    and aft,

Fourteen launches together striking the little craft.

They hacked at the boarding - nettings, they  
    swarmed above the rail ;

But the Long Tom roared from his pivot and the  
    grape-shot fell like hail :

Pike and pistol and cutlass, and hearts that knew  
    not fear,

Bulwarks of brawn and mettle, guarded the privateer.

And ever where fight was fiercest, the form of Reid  
was seen ;

Ever where foes drew nearest, his quick sword fell  
between.

Once in the deadly strife  
The boarders' leader pressed  
Forward of all the rest  
Challenging life for life ;  
But ere their blades had crossed,  
A dying sailor tossed  
His pistol to Reid, and cried,  
" Now riddle the lubber's hide ! "

But the privateersman laughed, and flung the  
weapon aside,

And he drove his blade to the hilt, and the foeman  
gasped and died.

Then the boarders took to their launches laden  
with hurt and dead,

But little with glory burdened, and out of the battle fled.

Now the tide was at flood again, and the night was  
almost done,

When the sloop-of-war came up with her odds of  
two to one,

6     *THE FIGHT OF THE "ARMSTRONG"*

And she opened fire ; but the Armstrong answered  
her, gun for gun,  
And the gay Carnation wilted in half an hour of sun.

Then the Armstrong, looking seaward, saw the  
mighty seventy-four,  
With her triple tier of cannon, drawing slowly to  
the shore.  
And the dauntless captain said : "Take our  
wounded and our dead,  
Bear them tenderly to land, for the Armstrong's  
days are o'er ;  
But no foe shall tread her deck, and no flag above  
it wave —  
To the ship that saved our honor we will give a  
shipman's grave."  
So they did as he commanded, and they bore their  
mates to land  
With the figurehead of Armstrong and the good  
sword in his hand.  
Then they turned the Long Tom downward, and  
they pierced her oaken side,  
And they cheered her, and they blessed her, and  
they sunk her in the tide.

Tell the story to your sons,  
When the haughty stranger boasts



Of his mighty ships and guns  
And the muster of his hosts,  
How the word of God was witnessed in the gallant  
days of yore  
When the twenty fled from one ere the rising of  
the sun,  
In the harbor of Fayal the Azore !

## THE KEARSARGE

IN the gloomy ocean bed  
Dwelt a formless thing, and said,  
In the dim and countless eons long ago,  
“I will build a stronghold high,  
Ocean’s power to defy,  
And the pride of haughty man to lay low.”

Crept the minutes for the sad,  
Sped the cycles for the glad,  
But the march of time was neither less nor more ;  
While the formless atom died,  
Myriad millions by its side,  
And above them slowly lifted Roncador.

Roncador of Caribee,  
Coral dragon of the sea,  
Ever sleeping with his teeth below the wave ;  
Woe to him who breaks the sleep !  
Woe to them who sail the deep !  
Woe to ship and man that fear a shipman’s grave !

Hither many a galleon old,  
Heavy-keeled with guilty gold,  
Fled before the hardy rover smiting sore ;  
But the sleeper silent lay  
Till the preyer and his prey  
Brought their plunder and their bones to Roncador.

Be content, O conqueror !  
Now our bravest ship of war,  
War and tempest who had often braved before,  
All her storied prowess past,  
Strikes her glorious flag at last  
To the formless thing that builded Roncador.

## “ALBEMARLE” CUSHING

Joy in rebel Plymouth town, in the spring of sixty-four,

When the Albemarle down on the Yankee frigates bore,

With the saucy Stars and Bars at her main ;

When she smote the Southfield dead, and the stout Miami quailed,

And the fleet in terror fled when their mighty cannon hailed

Shot and shell on her iron back in vain,

Till she slowly steamed away to her berth at Plymouth pier,

And their quick eyes saw her sway with her great beak out of gear,

And the color of their courage rose again.

All the summer lay the ram,

Like a wounded beast at bay,

While the watchful squadron swam

In the harbor night and day,

Till the broken beak was mended, and the weary  
vigil ended,  
And her time was come again to smite and slay.

Must they die, and die in vain,  
Like a flock of shambled sheep?  
Then the Yankee grit and brain  
Must be dead or gone to sleep,  
And our sailors' gallant story of a hundred years  
of glory  
Let us sell for a song, selling cheap!

Cushing, scarce a man in years,  
But a sailor thoroughbred,  
"With a dozen volunteers  
I will sink the ram," he said.  
"At the worst 't is only dying." And the old com-  
mander, sighing,  
"'T is to save the fleet and flag — go ahead!"  
. . . . .

Bright the rebel beacons blazed  
On the river left and right;  
Wide awake their sentries gazed  
Through the watches of the night;  
Sharp their challenge rang, and fiery came the  
rifle's quick inquiry,  
As the little launch swung into the light.

Listening ears afar had heard ;  
Ready hands to quarters sprung,  
The Albemarle awoke and stirred,  
And her howitzers gave tongue ;  
Till the river and the shore echoed back the mighty  
roar,  
When the portals of her hundred-pounders swung.

Will the swordfish brave the whale,  
Doubly girt with boom and chain ?  
Face the shrapnel's iron hail ?  
Dare the livid leaden rain ?  
Ah ! that shell has done its duty ; it has spoiled  
the Yankee's beauty ;  
See her turn and fly with half her madmen  
slain !

High the victors' taunting yell  
Rings above the battle roar,  
And they bid her mock farewell  
As she seeks the farther shore,  
Till they see her sudden swinging, crouching for  
the leap and springing  
Back to boom and chain and bloody fray once  
more.

Now the Southron captain, stirred  
By the spirit of his race,  
Stops the firing with a word,  
Bids them yield, and offers grace.  
Cushing, laughing, answers, "No! we are here to  
fight!" and so  
Swings the dread torpedo spar to its place.

Then the great ship shook and reeled,  
With a wounded, gaping side,  
But her steady cannon pealed  
Ere she settled in the tide,  
And the Roanoke's dull flood ran full red with  
Yankee blood,  
When the fighting Albemarle sunk and died.

Woe in rebel Plymouth town when the Albemarle  
fell,  
And the saucy flag went down that had floated  
long and well,  
Nevermore from her stricken deck to wave.  
For the fallen flag a sigh, for the fallen foe a  
tear!  
Never shall their glory die while we hold our glory  
dear,  
And the hero's laurels live on his grave.

Link their Cooke's with Cushing's name ; proudly  
call them both our own ;  
Claim their valor and their fame for America  
alone —  
Joyful mother of the bravest of the brave !



## AT SEA

SHALL we, the storm-tossed sailors, weep  
For those who may not sail again ;  
Or wisely envy them, and keep  
Our pity for the living men ?

Beyond the weary waste of sea,  
Beyond the wider waste of death,  
I strain my gaze and cry to thee  
Whose still heart never answereth.

O brother, is thy coral bed  
So sweet thou wilt not hear my speech ?  
This hand, methinks, if I were dead,  
To thy dear hand would strive to reach.

I would not, if God gave us choice  
For each to bear the other's part,  
That mine should be the silent voice,  
And thine the silent, aching heart.

Ah, well for any voyage done,  
Whate'er its end — or port or reef ;  
Better the voyage ne'er begun,  
For all ships sail the sea of Grief.

## THE CONSTITUTION'S LAST FIGHT

*A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew —  
Constitution, where ye bound for ?  
Wherever, my lad, there 's fight to be had,  
Acrost the Western Ocean.*

OUR captain was married in Boston town  
And sailed next day to sea ;  
For all must go when the State says so ;  
Blow high, blow low, sailed we.

“ Now what shall I bring for a bridal gift  
When my home-bound pennant flies ?  
The rarest that be on land or sea  
It shall be my lady's prize.”

“ There 's never a prize on sea or land  
Could bring such joy to me  
As my true love sound and homeward bound  
With a king's ship under his lee.”

The Western ocean is wide and deep,  
And wild its tempests blow,

But bravely rides Old Ironsides,  
A-cruising to and fro.

We cruised to the East and we cruised to the  
North,  
And Southing far went we,  
And at last off Cape de Verde we raised  
Two frigates sailing free.

Oh, God made man, and man made ships,  
But God makes very few  
Like him who sailed our ship that day  
And fought her, one to two.

He gained the weather-gage of both,  
He held them both a-lee ;  
And gun for gun till set of sun,  
He spoke them fair and free ;

Till the night-fog fell on spar and sail  
And ship and sea and shore,  
And our only aim was the bursting flame  
And the hidden cannon's roar.

Then a lifting rift in the mist showed up  
The stout Cyane close-hauled

To swing in our wake and our quarter rake,  
And a boasting Briton bawled :

“Starboard and larboard we’ve got him fast  
Where his heels won’t carry him through :  
Let him luff or wear, he’ll find us there —  
Ho, Yankee, which will you do ?”

We did not luff and we did not wear,  
But braced our topsails back,  
Till the sternway drew us fair and true  
Broadsides athwart her track.

Athwart her track and across her bows  
We raked her fore and aft,  
And out of the fight and into the night  
Drifted the beaten craft.

The slow *Levant* came up too late ;  
No need had we to stir.  
Her decks we swept with fire and kept  
The flies from troubling her.

We raked her again, and her flag came down,  
The haughtiest flag that floats,  
And the Limejuice dogs lay there like logs,  
With never a bark ‘in their throats.

With never a bark and never a bite,  
    But only an oath, to break,  
As we squared away for Praya Bay  
    With our prizes in our wake.

Parole they gave and parole they broke,  
    What matters the cowardly cheat,  
If the captain's bride was satisfied  
    With the one prize laid at her feet?

*A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew —  
    Constitution, where ye bound for?  
Wherever the British prizes be,  
    Though it 's one to two, or one to three —  
Old Ironsides means Victory,  
    Acrost the Western Ocean!*

## REUBEN JAMES

THREE ships of war had Preble when he left the  
    Naples shore,  
And the knightly king of Naples lent him seven  
    galleys more,  
And never since the Argo floated in the middle  
    sea  
Such noble men and valiant have sailed in company  
As the men who went with Preble to the siege of  
    Tripoli.  
Stewart, Bainbridge, Hull, Decatur — how their  
    names ring out like gold ! —  
Lawrence, Porter, Trippe, Macdonough, and a  
    score as true and bold ;  
Every star that lights their banner tells the glory  
    that they won ;  
But one common sailor's glory is the splendor of  
    the sun.

Reuben James was first to follow when Decatur  
    laid aboard  
Of the lofty Turkish galley and in battle broke his  
    sword.

Then the pirate captain smote him, till his blood  
was running fast,  
And they grappled and they struggled, and they  
fell beside the mast.  
Close behind him Reuben battled with a dozen,  
undismayed,  
Till a bullet broke his sword-arm, and he dropped  
the useless blade.  
Then a swinging Turkish sabre clove his left and  
brought him low,  
Like a gallant bark, dismasted, at the mercy of the  
foe.  
Little mercy knows the corsair : high his blade was  
raised to slay,  
When a richer prize allured him where Decatur  
struggling lay.  
“Help !” the Turkish leader shouted, and his  
trusty comrade sprung,  
And his scimeter like lightning o’er the Yankee  
captain swung.

Reuben James, disabled, armless, saw the sabre  
flashed on high,  
Saw Decatur shrink before it, heard the pirate’s  
taunting cry,  
Saw, in half the time I tell it, how a sailor brave  
and true



Still might show a bloody pirate what a dying man  
can do.

Quick he struggled, stumbling, sliding in the blood  
around his feet,

As the Turk a moment waited to make vengeance  
doubly sweet.

Swift the sabre fell, but swifter bent the sailor's  
head below,

And upon his 'fenceless forehead Reuben James  
received the blow !

So was saved our brave Decatur ; so the common  
sailor died ;

So the love that moves the lowly lifts the great to  
fame and pride.

Yet we grudge him not his honors, for whom love  
like this had birth —

For God never ranks His sailors by the Register  
of earth !

## A BUSINESS TRANSACTION

“IN THE DAYS OF VAN TROMP”

To Amsterdam and its Commodore,  
Over his pipe and his eau-de-vie,  
A flibote skimming the Texel shore  
Brought serious news for the Zuyder Zee :

Forty sail of the Channel Fleet,  
With a high-born Admiral of the Blue,  
Holland's bravest had come to greet  
And settle an ancient score or two.

Frugal of speech was the Commodore.  
“I will meet their wishes,” he briefly said,  
And straight to the offing his squadron bore,  
With a broom at the flagship's mainmast-head.

Quickly to work, in a business way,  
Went old Van Dam and his captains stout,  
Broadside for broadside, half the day,  
But the sturdy enemy still held out ;

Till about four bells in the afternoon

The English suddenly ceased their fire,  
And Van Dam hailed : " Have you struck so soon ?  
Is the score then settled, may I inquire ? "

And the answer came : " No ; we have not struck,  
But our powder is spent ; we can fight no more."  
" Ah, that is a matter of evil luck,  
In a case like this," said the Commodore.

Then he stroked his beard and he closed his eyes :  
" 'Twere a pity to mar so sweet a fight,  
On a beggarly question of supplies.  
Diable ! it spoils one's pleasure quite."

With the thrifty blood of his Holland sire  
A stream of a warmer fluid ran,  
From a Norman mother with heart of fire —  
And the mother it is that makes the man.

" To win or to lose," said the blood of France,  
" Were a problem simple as life or death ;  
But to win by an enemy's dull mischance ! " —  
He damned the lubbers below his breath.

Then : " Send me your boat aboard," he cried,  
" If you will not strike and you cannot fight.

Pity your stubborn bulldog pride  
Should bark so loud, with so small a bite ! ”

The Admiral came in his gig of state ;  
A captain by right of heritage,  
Favor had made him all but great,  
And Nature had never marred the page.

Dutchman all was the Commodore  
At once when he saw his wondrous guest,  
Marveling much and marveling more  
As he listed the visitor's request.

Never was such proposal made  
To sailor before, on land or sea :  
“ ’T was awkward to dabble in vulgar trade ;  
But have you some powder to sell to me ? ”

Dutch diplomacy struggled hard,  
But Gallic chivalry won the day.  
The sale was made and the bill was paid,  
And the guns went back to their pleasant play.

Ill had it gone with the Commodore,  
Had pluck or fortune deceived him then ;  
But he fought as he never fought before,  
And he brought his investment back again.

The great States-General, solemn folk,  
When old Van Dam came home next day,  
With his prizes in tow, forgave the joke,  
Or never perceived it — who can say?

## SUMMER IS PAST

HALF the race of life is over, and the breeze is well  
abaft.

Do we lead or do we follow? — naught it matters  
to us now.

All the joy was in the battle of the windward-run-  
ning craft,

In the squall against the topsail, in the wave be-  
fore the prow.

Oh, the consorts who were with us in the opening  
of the race!

Ah, the daring shallops foundered as we sailed  
into the wind!

Oh, the sweet and foolish passions when the sun  
was in our face,

And we left the laggard Prudence league on  
league away behind!

Then a friend was had for loving, and we loved  
without a thought;

We saw our hearts were naked, and we shamed  
not of the truth.

But the sober fruit of knowledge aye in bitterness  
is bought,  
And the flaming sword forever bars the Eden  
gate of youth.

## JACK CREAMER

A TRUE STORY OF 1812

THE boarding nettings are triced for fight ;  
Pike and cutlass are shining bright ;  
The boatswain's whistle pipes loud and shrill ;  
Gunner and topman work with a will ;  
Rough old sailor and reefer trim  
Jest as they stand by the cannon grim ;  
There 's a fighting glint in Decatur's eye,  
And brave Old Glory floats out on high.

But many a heart beats fast below  
The laughing lips as they near the foe ;  
For the pluckiest knows, though no man quails,  
That the breath of death is filling the sails.  
Only one little face is wan ;  
Only one childish mouth is drawn ;  
One little heart is sad and sore  
To the watchful eye of the Commodore.  
Little Jack Creamer, ten years old,  
In no purser's book or watch enrolled,



Must mope or skulk while his shipmates fight, —  
No wonder his little face is white !

“Why, Jack, old man, so blue and sad ?  
Afraid of the music ?” The face of the lad  
With mingled shame and anger burns.

Quick to the Commodore he turns :

“I ’m not a coward, but I think if you —

Excuse me, Capt’n, I mean if you knew

(I s’pose it ’s because I ’m young and small)

I ’m not on the books ! I ’m no one at all !

And as soon as this fighting work is done

And we get our prize-money, every one

Has his share of the plunder — *I* get none.”

“And you ’re sure we shall take her ?” “Sure ?

Why, sir,

She ’s only a blessed Britisher !

We ’ll take her easy enough, I bet ;

But glory ’s all that I ’m going to get !”

“Glory ! I doubt if I get more,

If I get so much,” said the Commodore ;

“But faith goes far in the race for fame,

And down on the books shall go your name.”

Bravely the little seaman stood

To his post while the scuppers ran with blood,

While grizzled veterans looked and smiled  
And gathered new courage from the child ;  
Till the enemy, crippled in pride and might,  
Struck his crimson flag and gave up the fight.  
Then little Jack Creamer stood once more  
Face to face with the Commodore.

“ You have got your glory,” he said, “ my lad,  
And money to make your sweetheart glad.  
Now, who may she be ? ” “ My mother, sir ;  
I want you to send the half to her.”  
“ And the rest ? ” Jack blushed and hung his head ;  
“ I ’ll buy some schoolin’ with that,” he said.

Decatur laughed ; then in graver mood :  
“ The first is the better, but both are good.  
Your mother shall never know want while I  
Have a ship to sail, or a flag to fly ;  
And schooling you ’ll have till all is blue,  
But little the lubbers can teach to you.”

*Midshipman* Creamer’s story is told —  
They did such things in the days of old,  
When faith and courage won sure reward,  
And the quarter-deck was not triply barred,  
To the fore-castle hero ; for men were men,  
And the Nation was close to its Maker then.

## THE FLAG

### AN INCIDENT OF STRAIN'S EXPEDITION

I NEVER have got the bearings quite,  
Though I've followed the course for many a  
year,  
If he was crazy, clean outright,  
Or only what you might say was "queer."

He was just a simple sailor man.  
I mind it as well as yisterday,  
When we messed aboard of the old Cyane.  
Lord! how the time does slip away!  
That was five and thirty year ago,  
And I never expect such times again,  
For sailors was n't afraid to stow  
Themselves on a Yankee vessel then.  
He was only a sort of bosun's mate,  
But every inch of him taut and trim;  
Stars and anchors and togs of state  
Tailors don't build for the like of him.  
He flew a no-account sort of name,

A reg'lar fo'cas'le "Jim" or "Jack,"  
With a plain "McGinnis" abaft the same,  
Giner'ly reefed to simple "Mack."  
Mack, we allowed, was sorter queer, —  
Ballast or compass was n't right.  
'Till he licked four Juicers one day, a fear  
Prevailed that he had n't larned to fight.  
But I reckon the Captain knowed his man,  
When he put the flag in his hand the day  
That we went ashore from the old Cyane,  
On a madman's cruise for Darien Bay.

Forty days in the wilderness  
We toiled and suffered and starved with Strain,  
Losing the number of many a mess  
In the Devil's swamps of the Spanish Main.  
All of us starved, and many died.  
One laid down, in his dull despair ;  
His stronger messmate went to his side —  
We left them both in the jungle there.  
It was hard to part with shipmates so ;  
But standing by would have done no good.  
We heard them moaning all day, so slow  
We dragged along through the weary wood.  
McGinnis, he suffered the worst of all ;  
Not that he ever piped his eye  
Or would n't have answered to the call

If they 'd sounded it for "All hands to die."  
I guess 't would have sounded for him before,  
But the grit inside of him kept him strong,  
Till we met relief on the river shore ;  
And we all broke down when it came along.

All but McGinnis. Gaunt and tall,  
Touching his hat, and standing square :  
"Captain, the Flag." . . . And that was all ;  
He just keeled over and foundered there.  
"The Flag ?" We thought he had lost his head —  
It might n't be much to lose at best —  
Till we came, by and by, to dig his bed,  
And we found it folded around his breast.  
He laid so calm and smiling there,  
With the flag wrapped tight about his heart ;  
Maybe he saw his course all fair,  
Only — *we* could n't read the chart.

## SIR HUGO'S CHOICE

It is better to die, since death comes surely,  
In the full noontide of an honored name,  
Than to lie at the end of years obscurely,  
A handful of dust in a shroud of shame.

. . . . .  
Sir Hugo lived in the ages golden,  
Warder of Aisne and Picardy ;  
He lived and died, and his deeds are told in  
The Book immortal of Chivalrie :

How he won the love of a prince's daughter —  
A poor knight he with a stainless sword —  
Whereat Count Rolf, who had vainly sought her,  
Swore death should sit at the bridal board.

“ A braggart's threat, for a brave man's scorn-  
ing ! ”

And Hugo laughed at his rival's ire,  
But couriers twain, on the bridal morning,  
To his castle gate came with tidings dire.

The first a-faint and with armor riven :

“ In peril sore have I left thy bride, —  
False Rolf waylaid us. For love and Heaven !  
Sir Hugo, quick to the rescue ride ! ”

Stout Hugo muttered a word unholy ;

He sprang to horse and he flashed his brand,  
But a hand was laid on his bridle slowly,  
And a herald spoke : “ By the king's command

“ This to Picardy's trusty warder : —

France calls first for his loyal sword,  
The Flemish spears are across the border,  
And all is lost if they win the ford.”

Sir Hugo paused, and his face was ashen,

His white lips trembled in silent prayer —  
God's pity soften the spirit's passion  
When the crucifixion of Love is there !

What need to tell of the message spoken ?

Of the hand that shook as he poised his lance ?  
And the look that told of his brave heart broken,  
As he bade them follow, “ For God and France ! ”

On Cambray's field next morn they found him,

'Mid a mighty swath of foemen dead ;

Her snow-white scarf he had bound around him  
With his loyal blood was baptized red.

It is all writ down in the book of glory,  
On crimson pages of blood and strife,  
With scanty thought for the simple story  
Of duty dearer than love or life.

Only a note obscure, appended  
By warrior scribe or monk perchance,  
Saith: "The good knight's ladye was sore offended  
That he would not die for her but France."

Did the ladye live to lament her lover?  
Or did roystering Rolf prove a better mate?  
I have searched the records over and over,  
But naught discover to tell her fate.

And I read the moral — A brave endeavor  
To do thy duty, whate'er its worth,  
Is better than life with love forever —  
And love is the sweetest thing on earth.



## GETTYSBURG

THERE was no union in the land,  
    Though wise men labored long  
With links of clay and ropes of sand  
    To bind the right and wrong.

There was no temper in the blade  
    That once could cleave a chain ;  
Its edge was dull with touch of trade  
    And clogged with rust of gain.

The sand and clay must shrink away  
    Before the lava tide :  
By blows and blood and fire assay  
    The metal must be tried.

Here sledge and anvil met, and when  
    The furnace fiercest roared,  
God's undiscerning workingmen  
    Reforged His people's sword.

Enough for them to ask and know  
    'The moment's duty clear —  
The bayonets flashed it there below,  
    The guns proclaimed it here :

To do and dare, and die at need,  
    But while life lasts, to fight —  
For right or wrong a simple creed,  
    But simplest for the right.

They faltered not who stood that day  
    And held this post of dread ;  
Nor cowards they who wore the gray  
    Until the gray was red.

For every wreath the victor wears  
    The vanquished half may claim ;  
And every monument declares  
    A common pride and fame.

We raise no altar stones to Hate,  
    Who never bowed to Fear :  
No province crouches at our gate,  
    To shame our triumph here.

Here standing by a dead wrong's grave  
    The blindest now may see,

The blow that liberates the slave  
But sets the master free !

When ills beset the nation's life  
Too dangerous to bear,  
The sword must be the surgeon's knife,  
Too merciful to spare.

O Soldier of our common land,  
'T is thine to bear that blade  
Loose in the sheath, or firm in hand,  
But ever unafraid.

When foreign foes assail our right,  
One nation trusts to thee —  
To wield it well in worthy fight —  
The sword of Meade and Lee !

## THE MEN OF THE ALAMO

To Houston at Gonzales town, ride, Ranger, for  
your life,  
Nor stop to say good-by to-day to home, or child,  
or wife;  
But pass the word from ranch to ranch, to every  
Texan sword,  
That fifty hundred Mexicans have crossed the  
Nueces ford,  
With Castrillon and perjured Cos, Sesmá and  
Almontê,  
And Santa Anna ravenous for vengeance and for  
prey !  
They smite the land with fire and sword ; the  
grass shall never grow  
Where northward sweeps that locust horde on San  
Antonio !

Now who will bar the foeman's path, to gain a  
breathing space,  
Till Houston and his scattered men shall meet him  
face to face ?

Who holds his life as less than naught when home  
and honor call,

And counts the guerdon full and fair for liberty to  
fall ?

Oh, who but Barrett Travis, the bravest of them  
all !

With seven score of riflemen to play the rancher's  
game,

And feed a counter-fire to halt the sweeping prairie  
flame ;

For Bowie of the broken blade is there to cheer  
them on,

With Evans of Concepcion, who conquered Castril-  
lon,

And o'er their heads the Lone Star flag defiant  
floats on high,

And no man thinks of yielding, and no man fears  
to die.

But ere the siege is held a week a cry is heard  
without,

A clash of arms, a rifle peal, the Ranger's ringing  
shout,

And two-and-thirty beardless boys have bravely  
hewed their way

To die with Travis if they must, to conquer if they  
may.

Was ever bravery so cheap in Glory's mart before  
In all the days of chivalry, in all the deeds of war ?

But once again the foemen gaze in wonderment and  
fear

To see a stranger break their lines and hear the  
Texans cheer.

God ! how they cheered to welcome him, those  
spent and starving men !

For Davy Crockett by their side was worth an  
army then.

The wounded ones forgot their wounds ; the dying  
drew a breath

To hail the king of border men, then turned to  
laugh at death.

For all knew Davy Crockett, blithe and generous  
as bold,

And strong and rugged as the quartz that hides its  
heart of gold.

His simple creed for word or deed true as the bul-  
let sped,

And rung the target straight : " Be sure you're  
right, then go ahead ! "

And were they right who fought the fight for Texas  
by his side ?

They questioned not ; they faltered not ; they only  
fought and died.

Who hath an enemy like these, God's mercy slay  
him straight! —

A thousand Mexicans lay dead outside the convent  
gate,

And half a thousand more must die before the for-  
tress falls,

And still the tide of war beats high around the  
leaguered walls.

At last the bloody breach is won ; the weakened  
lines give way ;

The wolves are swarming in the court ; the lions  
stand at bay.

The leader meets them at the breach, and wins the  
soldier's prize ;

A foeman's bosom sheathes his sword when gallant  
Travis dies.

Now let the victor feast at will until his crest be  
red —

We may not know what raptures fill the vulture  
with the dead.

Let Santa Anna's valiant sword right bravely hew  
and hack

The senseless corse ; its hands are cold ; they will  
not strike him back.

Let Bowie die, but 'ware the hand that wields his  
deadly knife ;

Four went to slay, and one comes back, so dear he  
sells his life.

And last of all let Crockett fall, too proud to sue  
for grace,

So grand in death the butcher dared not look upon  
his face.

. . . . .  
But far on San Jacinto's field the Texan toils are  
set,

And Alamo's dread memory the Texan steel shall  
whet.

And Fame shall tell their deeds who fell till all the  
years be run.

“Thermopylæ left one alive—the Alamo left  
none.”



JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY

*August 10, 1890*

HAVE thy people climbed to Nebo ?  
Is the Promised Land in sight,  
And the pleasant fields of Canaan  
Radiant in the morning light ?

Strike the harp, and sound the timbrel,  
For the weary night is past,  
For their wanderings are over,  
And the day hath come at last.

Lift on high the little children ;  
Lead the elders forth to see ;  
Let the maidens sing in gladness  
Of the joy that is to be.

Now for them the bulwarks totter,  
Now for them the Jordan dries, —  
But our Chief is dead on Phasga ;  
In the stranger land he lies.

Wonder not if we be silent ;  
Chide not if our eyes be dim ;  
We are mourning for our Prophet —  
Israel hath no more like him !

## THE LAST OF THE DRUIDS

CONAL, last of the Druids, stood by the ruined  
shrine,

And the ashes were cold on the altar and bitter and  
gray as brine ;

The sacred grove was deserted, and impious hands  
had raised

The mystic sign of the stranger where the holy fires  
had blazed.

He went to the home of his father, and a stranger  
bade him in

Who knew not the face of Conal nor came of his  
father's kin.

For the years were many and changeful since the  
Druid went afar

From the peaceful land of Ierne to the stormy fields  
of war.

He had battled with Pict and Briton, Norseman  
and Hun and Gaul,

When Dathi's glorious banner waved on the Alpine  
wall.

And now he was old, and weary of the splendid  
joy of strife,  
And he longed for the Druid cloister and the even-  
ing calm of life :  
“The gods of the brave will bless me for the foes  
I have slain,” he said,  
And he turned to the land of Ierne — and they  
told him the gods were dead !

Then he cursed the gods of his fathers, the many  
who fled from one,  
And he cursed the priest of the stranger for the  
thing that he had done.  
“I will find this priest, I will slay him, — let him  
bide on land or sea,  
Though a thousand swords defend him — and the  
gods shall be shamed by me !”

He went to the Court of Tara where the king had  
housed the priest ;  
He found him not at the palace, he found him not  
at the feast ;  
But down in a lowly hovel, where a man with the  
Black Death lay,  
They told him, “The good priest, Patrick, watches  
by night and day ;  
For the man he serves was his foeman in the days  
of his power and pride,

But the pride and the power have left him, and the  
love of his friends has died ;  
Kith or kin has he none — only one son, gone  
wild —  
And the Black Death's hand, Christ save us ! would  
part the mother and child.  
The boldest soldier in Erin, I warrant ye, would  
not dare  
To watch with old Conn the Druid, in the deadly  
pest-house there."

Never a word said Conal, but his face was set and  
gray,  
As he strode to the lonely cabin where the dying  
Druid lay,  
He knelt by the humble pallet, and the air was  
thick with death,  
But the lips of the stricken father smiled with his  
dying breath,  
And his feeble hand was lifted to bless with the  
Christian's sign  
The wayward son of his bosom — the last of the  
Druid line.

Then the sinful wrath of Conal passed like a mist  
away,  
And he kissed the hem of the garment of the man  
he had sworn to slay.

## WASHINGTON

God wills no man a slave. The man most meek,  
Who saw Him face to face on Horeb's peak,  
Had slain a tyrant for a bondman's wrong,  
And met his Lord with sinless soul and strong.  
But when, years after, overfraught with care,  
His feet once trod doubt's pathway to despair,  
For that one treason lapse, the guiding hand  
That led so far now barred the promised land.  
God makes no man a slave, no doubter free ;  
Abiding faith alone wins liberty.

No angel led our Chieftain's steps aright ;  
No pilot cloud by day, no flame by night ;  
No plague nor portent spake to foe or friend ;  
No doubt assailed him, faithful to the end.

Weaklings there were, as in the tribes of old,  
Who craved for fleshpots, worshiped calves of  
gold,  
Murmured that right should harder be than wrong,  
And freedom's narrow road so steep and long ;

But he who ne'er on Sinai's summit trod,  
Still walked the highest heights and spake with  
    God ;

Saw with anointed eyes no promised land  
By petty bounds or pettier cycles spanned,  
Its people curbed and broken to the ring,  
Packed with a caste and saddled with a king—  
But freedom's heritage and training school,  
Where man unrul'd should learn to wisely rule,  
Till sun and moon should see at Ajalon  
Kings' heads in dust and freemen's feet thereon.

His work well done, the leader stepped aside,  
Spurning a crown with more than kingly pride,  
Content to wear the higher crown of worth,  
While time endures, First Citizen of earth.

## THE LAY BROTHER'S STORY

(MONASTERY OF LA TRAPPE — 1856)

THAT is his grave, and this is mine —  
The Father was good to me so old,  
Though I spake no word and I made no sign,  
Nor ever nourished a hope so bold  
As to dream that my dust by his might lie,  
Who was saint on earth and is saint on high.

Forty years together we wrought,  
And not one look from him to tell  
That his mind went back for a fleeting thought  
To the life we both had known so well.  
For he had been here two years before  
I left the world and curbed my tongue,  
And I knew him well in the days of yore  
When I was not old and he was young.

Never a sign through all the years  
Till yesterday when his summons came,  
And I saw him smile through a veil of tears,  
And he took my hand and he called my name :



(For one hour of life, ere it fades away,  
To the dying Trappist is kindly given,  
That his soul may see, when its sins are shriven,  
How as death to life, and as night to day,  
Are the joys of earth to the Joy of Heaven !)

Then the Angel of Memory rolled the stone  
Back from the sepulchre of years,  
Till the forty winters of monotone  
And the forty summers our cells had known  
Were gone, and we two were grenadiers —  
Grenadiers of the Grande Armée,  
Side by side on that woful day  
At Kowno Bridge with the godlike Ney,  
Facing ten thousand Cossack spears.  
I saw him fall as they pressed us back,  
Inch by inch, to the further shore ;  
Then a mist of blood hid the battle wrack,  
And I prayed to awaken nevermore.  
But God's great mercy denied the boon  
And gave me life and some deeds to do,  
Till the end that came so sore and soon  
In shame and sorrow and Waterloo.  
Small loss was it then to leave the earth  
That held no longer or hope or dread ;  
But great the reward beyond my worth,  
For I found him here I had mourned for dead.

I marveled oft if he never thought  
Of France and glory and dreams so dear  
To our dear dead youth — ah ! I forgot  
The saint had been man — and a grenadier !

He held my hand, and the long desire  
Spake through his eyes and the glaze of death ;  
Something was, too, of the old-time fire  
Men feel when they taste the battle-breath.  
And something more of the love so strong  
No years could weaken, no reason chill,  
For the Chief we followed through right or wrong,  
As the planets swing to the great Sun's will.

God will not love him less, I know,  
For the love that gnawed at his silent breast  
Through years of speechless doubt and woe,  
For Himself hath said that love is best,  
And all that he asked I freely told,  
And would tell again though I died therefor —  
“Tell me,” he said, “my comrade old,  
Tell me about my Emperor !”

## WHITTIER

A law well kept in Otaheite saith :  
“ Speak not the Monarch’s name on pain of death ! ”

HIGH on his throne majestic Wrong  
Triumphant sate, and all in awe  
Paid homage due — amid the throng  
Was none so supple-kneed as Law.

The patriot at the shrine of Self  
With hardly more devotion bowed,  
The trader eager-eyed for pelf,  
The pulpit politician loud,

And all the mob of caste and class,  
Before the throne with tribute drew  
And groveled low, as loth to pass ;  
But no man spake the name *taboo*,

Till Freedom’s poet came and sung,  
And slaves of Slavery in shame  
No longer held the servile tongue —  
For all men spake the tyrant’s name. .

## WOBURN

NEED we tell the stirring story of the builders of  
the 'Town

Where the record of their glory every stone hath  
written down ?

Do we look beyond the ripeness, to the sapling or  
the root ?

Nay, we know the tree is healthy — we have tasted  
of the fruit.

Fair and stately is the city, from the lowly hamlet  
grown ;

But its strength is ruled and measured by the hid-  
den corner-stone.

Not in darkness, but in wisdom, wrought the pre-  
scent pioneers,

Hewing pathways, building bridges, for the march-  
ing of the years,

For the glorious procession that their eyes might  
never see

Of the serried ages moving to the light of Liberty ;

Moving slowly, footsore, weary, for the road is dark  
and long,

Every passage barred by Power, every hilltop held  
by Wrong ;

Till the dawn of Freedom breaketh, with the prom-  
ised land in view,

Where the simple many toil not for the strong and  
cunning few,

Where the worker knows no master, and the thinker  
takes no heed

Of the morrow lest he perish in the selfish game of  
greed.

Naught the Fathers recked of hardships, naught  
of triumphs sorely won ;

They but saw the day's endeavor and the duty to  
be done.

For they said : " The sum we know not, but God  
keeps the score in sight ;

Every cipher makes it tenfold, if you place it to the  
right."

Who hath faith may move a mountain. Aye, for  
faith shall move the man,  
And the strong arm of the righteous carry out the  
heavenly plan.

So in sacrifice and travail, as a coral island grows,  
With the builders for its ramparts, line by line the  
structure rose.

Not on perishable columns be their faithful names  
enrolled ;  
Not in fleeting song or story be their valiant actions  
told.

But by sons who stand for honor, in the council, on  
the field ;  
By unspotted civic virtue, Freedom's sword and  
spear and shield ;

By the simple faith and courage left in heritage and  
trust, —  
Shall the City hold its charter, when the parchment  
turns to dust !

## NATURE THE FALSE GODDESS

THE vilest work of vilest man,  
The cup that drugs, the sword that slays,  
The purchased kiss of courtesan,  
The lying tongue of blame or praise,

The cobra's fang, the tiger's spring,  
The python's murderous embrace —  
The wrath of any living thing —  
A man may fear but bravely face.

But thou, cold Mother, knowest naught  
Of love, or hate, or joy, or woe ;  
Thy bounties come to man unsought,  
Thy curses fall on friend and foe.

Thou bearest balm upon thy breath,  
Or sowest poison in the air ;  
And if man reapeth life or death,  
Thou dost not know, thou dost not care.

Thou art God's instrument of fate,  
Obedient, mighty, soulless, blind,  
No demon to propitiate,  
No deity in love enshrined.

Let him who turns from God away  
To Bel or Moloch bend the knee,  
Defile his soul to wood or clay,  
Or thrill with Voodoo's ecstasy,

Seek any fetich undivine,  
Be any superstition's thrall —  
From Heaven or Hell will come a sign,  
But thou alone art deaf to all.



## RECANTATION

It is not wisdom to be over-wise :  
At twenty, one knows all ; at thirty, less ;  
Happy if even then his blindness he may guess,  
Ere forty open his conceited eyes  
To their own blankness, with severe surprise, —  
Thrice happy if his folly he confess,  
Who thought to find his perfect happiness  
In tepid Friendship's unpoetic guise.

A timid sailor of the temperate zone,  
I said : " Joy dwells not North, nor East, nor West,  
Nor anywhere save in the sea-ways known  
Where consort souls find harmony and rest " —  
Till sudden Southward was my shallop blown,  
And then, at last, I knew that Love was best.

## A SAILOR'S YARN

THIS is the tale that was told to me  
By a battered and shattered son of the sea, —  
To me and my messmate, Silas Green,  
When I was a guileless young marine.

---

'T was the good ship Gyascutus,  
All in the China seas,  
With the wind a-lee and the capstan free  
To catch the summer breeze.

'T was Captain Porgie on the deck,  
To his mate in the mizzen hatch,  
While the boatswain bold, in the forward hold,  
Was winding his larboard watch.

“ Oh, how does our good ship head to-night ?  
How heads our gallant craft ? ”  
“ Oh, she heads to the E. S. W. by N.,  
And the binnacle lies abaft ! ”

“ Oh, what does the quadrant indicate,  
And how does the sextant stand ? ”

“ Oh, the sextant's down to the freezing point,  
And the quadrant's lost a hand ! ”

“ Oh, and if the quadrant has lost a hand  
And the sextant falls so low,  
It's our bodies and bones to Davy Jones  
This night are bound to go !

“ Oh, fly aloft to the garboard strake !  
And reef the spanker boom ;  
Bend a studding-sail on the martingale,  
To give her weather room.

“ O boatswain, down in the for'ard hold,  
What water do you find ? ”

“ Four foot and a half by the royal gaff  
And rather more behind ! ”

“ O sailors, collar your marline spikes  
And each belaying-pin ;  
Come, stir your stumps and spike the pumps,  
Or more will be coming ! ”

They stirred their stumps, they spiked the pumps,  
They spliced the mizzen brace ;

Aloft and alow they worked, but oh !  
The water gained apace.

They bored a hole above the keel  
To let the water out ;  
But, strange to say, to their dismay,  
The water in did spout.

Then up spoke the Cook of our gallant ship,  
And he was a lubber brave :  
“ I have several wives in various ports,  
And my life I 'd order save.”

Then up spoke the Captain of Marines,  
Who dearly loved his prog :  
“ It 's awful to die, and it 's worse to be dry,  
And I move we pipes to grog.”

Oh, then 't was the noble second mate  
What filled them all with awe ;  
The second mate, as bad men hate,  
And cruel skippers jaw.

He took the anchor on his back  
And leaped into the main ;  
Through foam and spray he clove his way,  
And sunk and rose again !

Through foam and spray, a league away  
The anchor stout he bore ;  
Till, safe at last, he made it fast  
And warped the ship ashore !

'T ain't much of a job to talk about,  
But a ticklish thing to see,  
And suth'in to do, if I say it, too,  
For that second mate was me !

---

Such was the tale that was told to me  
By that modest and truthful son of the sea ;  
And I envy the life of a second mate,  
Though captains curse him and sailors hate,  
For he ain't like some of the swabs I 've seen,  
As would go and lie to a poor marine.

## HOPE

THE star you seem to see, love,  
With eyes more bright and clear,  
All dark and dead may be, love,  
This many a hundred year.

But though its fires may never  
Send forth another ray,  
That beam through space forever  
Shall wing its shining way.

So, spite of saints and sages  
And maxims manifold,  
Love lives through all the ages,  
Though hope be dead and cold.









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